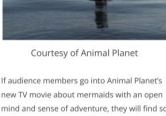


'Mermaids: The Body Found' proves there's something mysterious beneath the surface

👤 John Sokes 📅 May 28, 2012 💬 8 Comments

🔖 Mermaids: The Body Found , Paranormal Activity , The Blair Witch Project



Courtesy of Animal Planet

If audience members go into Animal Planet's new TV movie about mermaids with an open mind and sense of adventure, they will find so much to enjoy in the two-hour special. Balancing fact and fiction in that nebulous area known as speculation, *Mermaids: The Body Found* is one of the best TV shows of the year. It plays like a cinematic cousin to *The Blair Witch Project* and *Paranormal Activity*, and it never ceases to impress with stunning CGI, clever storytelling and a few tantalizing morsels of indisputable fact.

What's real and what's fake on the program will depend on the individual viewer. I went in open to anything and willing to take all of the revelations at face value. I knew that much of the storyline was the work of Hollywood rather than the scientific community, but that didn't decrease my enjoyment one bit. *Mermaids: The Body Found* thrives on its ability to teeter-totter back and forth between "actual" and "possible." This will undoubtedly annoy some purists (mostly those people who don't believe in Bigfoot, the Loch Ness monster or aliens). But for the rest of us — those people who cherish a sense of discovery and mystery in our world — the film will delight.

There are some facts that are substantial. There is an unidentified sound that has been captured at least twice by researchers. It emanates from the depths of the ocean and appears to be organic in nature. No scientist has been able to identify what creature made the sound, but it definitely appears to be a highly-advanced communication system of some sort. Similar to a dolphin, but still distinct. It's nicknamed "The Bloop," and it has confounded many theorists for years.



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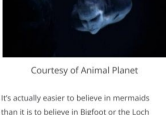
Another fact: It appears that the mass beaching of whales a few years ago was tied to sonar activity by the United States Navy, even though the military branch denies any fault.

Then there's the aquatic ape theory, a hypothesis that a strain of our early ancestors took to the seas and morphed into mermaids. Although this sounds like something from a Disney movie, there are some facts that will get your head scratching. First off, open the palm of your hand. In between the fingers will be a fleshy webbing. It's not exactly fish-like, but it's very unique to humans. Apes don't feature this webbing, and it begs the question: How did it get there? You could probably ask the same question of the extra flesh between your toes.

Humans also have subcutaneous fat that helps warm our bodies (similar to dolphins and whales). We can hold our breath for a long period of time. We don't have hair over our body like our ancestors or ape cousins (perhaps to help us swim?). We have an instinctual ability to survive in water.

All of this evidence doesn't prove that mermaids exist. However, it does furrow the brow.

One of the strongest bits of evidence is our cultural history. Mermaids have been featured in mythology, paintings and oral traditions for centuries. Could there be a genesis for these stories? Was there some creature that sparked this line of questioning?



Courtesy of Animal Planet

It's actually easier to believe in mermaids than it is to believe in Bigfoot or the Loch Ness Monster. Our planet is mostly made of water, and much of this blue expanse has never been explored. If a Bigfoot dies in the woods, wouldn't the bones eventually be found? If a mermaid dies in the middle of the ocean, there's probably no way to confirm its existence.

Mermaids: The Body Found jumps beyond these conspiracy theories and tells another story about a group of scientists from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Apparently these "researchers" investigated the Bloop and also autopsied an actual mermaid body. Their most convincing evidence is a short cell phone video filmed by a pair of children on a beach.

SPOILER ALERT: This is probably where Animal Planet uses its creative license.

No matter what's real or fake, *Mermaids: The Body Found* delivers on so many levels. Watching the possible evolution of these mermaids in their CGI historical worlds is sometimes breathtaking. Hearing the conspiracy theories is fun. Hearing the facts of the case is extremely interesting. Taken together, the two-hour special, which replays tonight at 7 p.m. EDT, is a perfect kickoff for the summer months. There's more enjoyment with these finned mythological creatures than most sitcoms and dramas.

Consider me a believer and someone who will now think twice when dipping my toe in the ocean.